

## DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

EPISCOPAL CHURCH CENTER • 815 SECOND AVENUE • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10017

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March 18, 1982

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EDITORS: Inquiries may be sent to the Personnel Office at the Episcopal Church Center concerning the position, Coordinator for Overseas Ministries, in the World Mission in Church and Society unit which will be open if the Rev. David B. Birney receives the required consents from diocesan standing committees and bishops approving his election as Bishop of Idaho.

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PROVINCE III LEADS  
ALCOHOLISM PROGRAM

DPS 82073

WASHINGTON (DPS, March 18) -- The National Episcopal Coalition on Alcohol was incorporated here Feb. 17, by alcoholism chairmen of diocesan committees of Province III to implement the Resolution on Alcoholism adopted by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 1979.

This resolution mandates a spiritual response to drug dependency: specific recommendations concerning intervention, basic education and diocesan policies are to be found in the Church Pension Fund publication: *Alcoholism and the Church -- A Call to Action*.

Alcoholism committee representatives of the thirteen dioceses of Province III have met together four times during the past two years and recognized the need for a national coalition which would encourage and assist dioceses, parishes and organizations to implement the matters in the resolution and bring together some of the fragmented efforts now being made.

The Rt. Rev. David Richards, director of the House of Bishops' Office of Pastoral Development, met with the provincial group in October and challenged the

group to dedicate themselves to action in the church about alcoholism, the nation's largest public health problem and the third largest killer.

The Coalition is currently surveying all dioceses of the Church to determine the extent of action that has been taken in response to the 1979 Alcoholism Resolution. A report will be made by the Coalition to General Convention later this year. A grant of \$975 has been made by the Synod of Province III to underwrite this survey and report.

The signers of the Articles of Incorporation were the Rt. Rev. William Spofford, assistant Bishop of Washington, the Rev. Mark Anschutz, the Rev. Henry Myers, the Rev. Harry Shelly, the Rev. William Lowery and Mr. J. Russell Horton. These signers included chairmen of three diocesan alcoholism committees: Shelly, Maryland; Anschutz, Virginia; and Horton, Washington.

The organizational meeting of the Coalition will be held in Philadelphia on April 29, when representatives of the national Church and other dioceses and provinces will be invited to participate. A national board of directors is being sought. For further information write to Horton at National Episcopal Coalition on Alcohol, P.O. Box 50489, Washington, D.C. 20004.

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#### Picture Caption

#82073 Leaders of Alcoholism programs in the Episcopal Church's Province III have taken the lead in creating a National Episcopal Coalition on Alcohol in response to a resolution from the 1979 General Convention. Signing the articles of incorporation for the Coalition are (from left): The Rev. William Lowery, the Rev. Harry Shelly, the Rev. Henry Myers, J. Russell Horton and the Rev. Mark Anschutz. Shelly, Anschutz and Horton are diocesan alcoholism chairmen in Maryland, Virginia and Washington and early coalition work is being coordinated through Horton's office.

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THEOLOGIAN LIMNS  
AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY

DPS 82074

NEW YORK (DPS, March 18) -- An African New Testament scholar recently told a seminary community that the West must turn its attention to Africa and Latin America and hand over to them the "microphone in the world auditorium."

Preaching in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd at the General Theological Seminary here, March 2, the Rev. Dr. John S. Mbiti said later that the rich theological yield of the Third World and the phenomenal growth of Christianity in Africa since the beginning of this century -- from nine million to 225 million today -- represents a spiritual shift in the Christian world that must be recognized in Europe and America.

He also said that the Independent churches in Africa, which have broken off from missionary-founded churches, have attempted "to free themselves from traditions which have been imported from Europe and America."

The sermon, which was Mbiti's first public appearance at the seminary, began a week-long discussion on Christianity and cultural pluralism which included two days of lectures by Mbiti on prayer, faith and salvation in the African and biblical worlds.

In three lectures laced with personal anecdotes and illustrations which betrayed the oral tradition on which he was nourished as a child in Kenya, Mbiti told his audience that the growth of African Christianity has occurred primarily since colonialism was shed and the Christian message freed of Western political associations.

"... they are now more free to opt for Christian faith than probably they were under colonial rule," he said. "Because at that time there was this combination of colonial presence and Christian presence, and for many people there was no possibility to draw distinctions. But now after independence people are able to make a choice and see that the Christian faith is not necessarily the same as colonial presence."

For most participants, the lectures and discussions were their first introduction to the distinct variety of Christianity that has blossomed since native African thought and religion have freely mixed with the Christian message.

Mbiti accounted for the rise of the Independent church movement by citing the insufficient room allowed for prayer by mission churches. "For the African



Christian the Bible is our life," he said. "We feel taken up by the kind of religion that is recorded in the Bible. It does not contradict or embarrass us when we enter into the religion of the Bible," said Mbiti in discussing the relation of native prayer to Christianity.

Many listeners filing out of Seabury Auditorium where the lectures were held expressed both fascination and confusion over the picture Mbiti had presented.

The absence of an "issue-approach" -- common in the West -- left many listeners at a loss, since the tendency in the West has been to identify the work of the Church in Europe and America with the issues of nuclear proliferation and restricted social services, and in Latin America and southern Africa with the military liberation movements.

At points during question and answer periods Mbiti appeared to avoid mixing ideology with African Christianity in an effort to protect the integrity of African theology against the pressure by a western audience to interpret and shape it in the light of politics.

In responding to a question about the relation of African theology to the liberation theology of some American black theologians who have called for solidarity among all black peoples, Mbiti said American blacks have looked more to Africa than Africans have to them.

"Apart from South Africa the concerns of Black Theology differ considerably from those of African Theology," Mbiti wrote in the magazine *Worldview* in 1974. "The latter grows out of our joy in the experience of the Christian faith, whereas Black Theology emerges from the pains of oppression. African Theology is not so restricted in its concerns, nor does it have an ideology to propagate."

He also said that he did not support the World Council of Churches' decision to provide money to nationalist liberation organizations operating in southern Africa. Mbiti was director and professor at the Ecumenical Institute sponsored by the World Council of Churches for six years.

Mbiti studied at Makere University in Uganda and Barrington College in Rhode Island before taking his doctorate in New Testament theology from Cambridge University. He taught for ten years at Makere and has been visiting professor at Harvard Divinity School and Union Theological Seminary. After leaving the Ecumenical Institute, Mbiti taught at universities in Switzerland and West Germany.

He is a canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, Namirembe, Uganda, and is currently the parish priest in the Reformed Church of the Canton of Berne, Switzerland. Mbiti is an Anglican and the author of several books.